

# Developmental Observation Topic Plan

## How You Can Help Me Play with Other Children: What You Can Do and Say

(Forming Close, Secure Relationships)

Age Range: Birth—36 months



### What parents will be observing



- How what they do and say can help their children develop social skills through play with other children
- How their children give them “clues” for the kind of support they need



### Environment



Put out a generally interesting environment using objects and activities that parents have enjoyed during past sessions. Be sure to include objects and activities appropriate to the range of ages in your group. Some suggestions are:

- infant materials that are fun to look at and listen to, that they or their parents can activate; soft books; floor mats where infants can practice moving; some scarves for playing peek-a-boo
- homemade puppet box with puppets or cardboard box to climb into, with holes cut out for playing peek-a-boo
- large motor area with slide, rocking boat, or climber

For this DOT, it is important to have out materials that draw children together (such as a big cardboard box with streamers, a slide, or a water or sand table), as well as age-appropriate objects for manipulative and pretend play. Also put out some toys that encourage turn-taking (such as balls for rolling back and forth), and duplicate toys (such as two of the same doll, two sit-on scooter toys)



### Opening Discussion



#### A. Hello Song (with names of each child and parent)

Hello (child’s name), Hello (parent’s name), How are you? How are you?

We’re so glad to see you! We’re so glad to see you! Come and play! Come and play!



**Note to facilitator:** As children become familiar with the song, they will begin to show their recognition. You will see them become still. They will start waiting to hear their name, and some will show smiles and other signs of pleasure when they hear it - be sure and point this out to the parents!



## Opening Discussion



### B. Introducing the Developmental Observation Topic

#### 1. Providing information on the DOT

Today we are going to talk about what you can DO or SAY to help your child develop social skills that s/he will need in order to play well with others and develop friends.

At EVERY age, children notice and are interested in other children. They show this first by watching and then later approaching and joining other children; first by cooing and then later by talking to others; first by imitating and then later by creating imitation games. Even later, they begin to pretend together.

Think about the many social skills they are learning - how to show interest in others, how to start an interaction, how to respond when someone else starts an interaction, how to take turns, how to share, how to keep an interaction going by being responsive to and interested in others.

**Parents and other caregivers can help this process along in many ways. For example, they can:**

- create opportunities for children to be together at times and places when they themselves are also available to support interactions and play
- help children notice each other's interest, initiations and actions
- "carry" the interaction when needed to help get it going - by modeling, describing what each child is doing, adding an interesting action and describing it, suggesting how to approach or respond to another, giving words for approaching or responding to another
- pull back, but be available, to enter again when needed - "wait & watch"



#### 2. Sharing what we already know

Ask parents to share some things they already do to support their children's play. Some possible conversations starters are:







- **What opportunities does your child have to be with other children around his/her age?**
- **Have you yourself created some of these opportunities?**
- **When you are with your child and another child, what are some of the things you already do to get the interaction going?**



## Opening Discussion



### 3. Summarizing the main points

-  Developing the skills to interact with others is one of the major "jobs" of early childhood.
-  There are many things that we adults can do to help our children gain these skills, including providing opportunities for interaction and play.
-  While many parents may not consciously think about it, they do and say many things to help their young children learn social skills by supporting their interactions with other young children.
-  When parents DO think about it, they can consciously use these behaviors as "strategies" - they can do and say particular types of things to help their children learn these important social skills!
-  During play-time, we are going to ask you to try out some of these strategies with your child to see what happens.
-  Don't expect to see instant results, because social skills take time to develop - none of us learn something well the first time we try it, even with the best teacher!

## C. Describing the Environment

Today's environment is a general play environment, but we have included more types of objects that are most likely to bring children together so that you have more opportunities to try out the strategies. For example, we have put out the slide and the sand table. We have also put out an activity where children are NOT likely to interact - an art activity. We have also put out a variety of other toys and objects that children like to play with. Sometimes there is only one of them available, such as the scooter. For others, there are plenty to go around, such as stacking blocks.



You may find that you can practice different strategies with these different types of activities and materials, because your children will be interacting with one another in different ways in these different situations!

## D. Suggesting Things to Try

Today we are going to ask you to try some of the strategies that we talked about and see how your child responds. We've made each of you a little "cheat sheet" to carry with you so you can remember what to try (*pass them out*). We've also put signs up in various places as reminders of what you might be able to try in different locations. See if you can try at least 3 of the strategies on the card.



**Note to facilitator:** *As a reminder to parents, put these "things to try" on cards around the room. (with particular objects)(cards to carry around - "cheat sheets"). For example, the card may summarize the points below and/or be separate by ages. Then hand appropriate card to each parent.*

## E. Making Predictions

You will be watching to see what happens when you try out some of the strategies that we talked about.

- What do you think will happen?
- How do you think your child will respond? (Remembering that the goal is to create interest and play interactions among children)



### Parent-Child Observation Time



As you interact with each dyad,

- remind parents to try some of the strategies
- if you see a strategy happening, comment on it and on its effect on children
- use some of the strategies yourself if you notice an opportunity and it is not too intrusive
- if a parent asks you to model, do it! then encourage them to try



### Transitions



#### A. From Activity to Snack

Without being obvious about it, model some of the strategies during snack as opportunities arise. Or if you notice a parent using a strategy, point it out and also notice its effect on children.

#### B. From Snack to Songs & Games

Entice children away from snack and to a central area by starting a familiar song or finger play with dyads who are finished with snack. Do a song with actions and laughter, so that children will want to come! Or play a circle game with a parachute.



### Parent-Child Songs & Games



Sing/say 1 or 2 favorite songs/nursery rhymes. Be sure to include a song or game that children do with their parents (such as "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," as well as a song or game that involves all children (such as "Ring Around the Rosy"). **Are peer interactions different in these two songs/games?**



### Closing Discussion



#### A. Reviewing Predictions




- Which strategy did you find most interesting and useful?
- How did your child respond?
- Did s/he do what you thought s/he would do?



## Closing Discussion



### B. Main Points

-  Young children are **VERY** interested in other children, and we as parents and caregivers have **VERY** important roles in providing opportunities and helping them learn social skills for interacting with others.
-  **HOW** children interact with other children changes as they develop movement and language skills, and as they become able to regulate their own behavior so that it fits in with the behavior of others.
-  Parents and other caregivers can help make sure that children move smoothly through this process and develop good social skills by setting up opportunities and being available to encourage and support interactions, knowing that one of the primary "strategies" is to "wait & watch," and then join briefly to help your children along.

### C. Carry-Over to Home

Based on what you saw today, are there things you could do at home to help your child develop social skills for playing with other children?

**Examples:**

- what are some ways you have thought of to provide opportunities for child-child play?
- what are some ways you have thought of to use some of the strategies we have talked about?

### D. Good-Bye Song

Be sure and use the same goodbye song each time so that it becomes a familiar routine. Call attention to how children begin to respond not only to their own names, but also how the older children are begin to know one another's names. Even in music activities you can see children's interest in other children emerging!



## Helping Your Child Develop Skills for Playing with Others

### What You Can Do

#### SET IT UP

- create opportunities during the day/week (playground, play-dates, church, etc.)
- set the scene (age-appropriate "social toys"; available adults who will encourage, model, provide language when needed)

#### LET YOUR CHILD BE YOUR GUIDE

Floor/Lap Child	
When your child...	What you can do and say!
<p>looks with interest at another child ...</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Position</b> him so he can see better or be face to face with the other child</li> <li>• <b>Acknowledge</b> the interest ("You want to see what she is doing!")</li> <li>• <b>Describe</b> what the other child is doing.</li> <li>• <b>Extend</b>—Try to keep it going longer by helping the other child notice your child's interest . ("Jamie's really watching you - he likes to see you bounce the ball!")</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <p style="color: #00a651; text-align: center;">"He's looking at you, too!" or "She's making a noise with that ball!."</p> </div>
<p>laughs at what another child does ...</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Position</b> her so she can see better or be face to face with the other child</li> <li>• <b>Acknowledge</b> the interest</li> <li>• <b>Describe</b> what the other child is going ("He made a funny noise didn't he! He hit the blocks together!")</li> <li>• <b>Extend</b>—Try to keep it going by helping the other child notice your child's response ("He thinks you made a funny noise, and he likes it - can you do it again?")</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <p style="color: #9c27b0; text-align: center;">"You think that's really funny, don't you!"</p> </div>
<p>"talks to" (makes any sound toward) another child ...</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Position</b> her so she can see better or be face to face with the other child</li> <li>• <b>Acknowledge</b> the interest ("You want to talk to him, don't you!")</li> <li>• <b>Describe</b> what the other child is doing ("He's riding on the scooter!")</li> <li>• <b>Extend</b>—Try to keep it going by helping the other child notice your child's initiation</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <p style="color: #9c27b0; text-align: center;">"He's trying to talk to you, even though he doesn't have words yet!"</p> </div>

**Helping Your Child Develop Skills for Playing with Others**  
**What You Can Do**

**Movers/Talkers**

**When your child...**

**What you can do and say!**

plays alone and does not appear interested in other children ...



- **Move closer to the action** - wait to see if s/he becomes interested
- **Start a simple game** (such as hiding and finding) or a simple pretend game (such as feeding a baby doll) - have fun and talk about what you are doing so others will want to join in

plays along-side another child but without interaction ...



**Use the situation**

- Describe what the other child is doing, or in the other child's hearing, describe what YOUR child is doing - try to get them interested in one another
- Hand your child a duplicate toy ("Do you want to do it, too?")

**Briefly step into the situation**

- Create a different but related role for each child
- Try to keep it going by joining the play and modeling a new twist on the game (such as rolling the ball through a big tube)

"You push, and she'll pull" or "Let's roll the ball together"

approaches another child with interest...



or

looks with interest at what another child is doing ...



**Use the situation**

- Go to where the action is
- Acknowledge the interest ("That looks fun, doesn't it?")
- Describe what the other child is doing
- Hand your child a duplicate toy
- Interpret what your child might be thinking ("You want a truck, too.")
- Draw other children's interest to your child's interest ("You're having so much fun that she wants to play, too!")
- Describe/model what your child can do with the object - match what the other child is doing

**Prompt interaction**

- "Tell Molly you want to put some blocks in, too." Look expectantly at Molly.
- "Tell/show Molly what you want." (accept a point)
- Briefly step in to start a new game
- Give words - "Tell Johnny what we are doing."



**Try to keep it going**

- Drawing attention to what each child is doing—describe the action
- Suggest new actions
- Briefly step in and model a new action or direction for the play - then step (wait & watch)

"She's pushing; let's push, too!"

# Helping Your Child Develop Skills for Playing with Others

## What You Can Do

Movers/Talkers	
When your child...	What you can do and say!
<p>is approached by another child who seems interested in what your child is doing...</p> 	<p><b>Use the situation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make room for the other child</li> <li>• Welcome the other child ("Do you want to play, too?")</li> <li>• Hand the other child a duplicate toy or one that fits into the play ("Here's a truck for you.")</li> <li>• Interpret what the child might be thinking ("Do you want a truck, too?" or "I think Sally wants to play trucks, too.")</li> </ul> <p><b>Prompt interaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Give Molly a truck so she can play, too."</li> <li>• Interpret what the children might be thinking ("Molly wants you to chase her.")</li> </ul> <p><b>Try to keep it going (see above)</b></p>
<p>wants the same object the other child has ...</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provide</b> a duplicate toy</li> <li>• <b>Pick a similar toy and start having fun</b> with it - label what YOU are doing to have fun</li> <li>• <b>Try to create a game</b> that the other child will want to join, using a different toy or set of toys</li> <li>• It is likely that one of the above will work - if not, <b>label the emotion</b></li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>"You really want to play with that, don't you? After he is done with it, then you can play with it!"</p> </div>